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ABSTRACT

During April and May 1977, individual interviews of all division chairpersons and House advisors and of selected administrators and House clerks (22 total) were conducted as part of a multi-phase, multi-method study of the House Plan at Cypress College. The interviews were intended to gather suggestions for reorganizing the administrative structure of the House Plan and to study the perceptions of the House Dean concept in depth. Almost everyone interviewed perceived the proposed House Dean as the one person responsible for both instructional and student activities within a House, as a full-time administrator working with department chairpersons' assistance when necessary, and possibly as a House coordinator. However, most respondents objected to the House Dean concept on the basis that there was no need for an additional, expensive administrator, and that one person would not have enough time to administer both a division and a House well. Those who favored the concept felt it would bring Houses and divisions closer together as a logical final step to House Plan development. Some respondents suggested House reorganization that would make House clerks responsible for advising House student governments, and many division chairpersons proposed that the clerks take on some division clerical duties in addition to House tasks. (Author/TE)

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HOUSE PLAN ADMINISTRATIVE REORGANIZATION AND THE HOUSE DEAN CONCEPT

Research Report No. 7
June, 1977

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JC 780 309

ABSTRACT

During the months of April and May, 1977, individual interviews were conducted with each Division Chairperson and House advisor, and with selected administrators and House clerks at Cypress College. The two goals of these interviews were: 1) to gather suggestions for reorganizing the administrative structure of the House Plan, and 2) to study the perceptions of the House Dean concept in-depth.

The major observations are summarized below:

1. Almost everyone interviewed perceived the House Dean as one person responsible for both instructional and student activities within a House. The House Dean was usually perceived as a full-time administrator, with assistance from department chairpersons, as necessary, and possibly a House coordinator.

2. Most respondents had a negative evaluation of the above House Dean concept. The most frequent objections were that there was no need for an additional, expensive administrator, and that one person would probably not have enough time to do a good job of administering both the division and the House.

   Of those respondents with a positive evaluation of the above House Dean concept, the most frequent comments were that a House Dean would bring the House and division closer together, and that it was the logical final step in the development of the House Plan.

3. A few respondents had a different perception of the House Dean. They viewed the House Dean as a full-time House advisor, responsible for student activities within the House, and on an administrative level parallel with the Division Chairperson.

4. Some respondents suggested that the House could be reorganized so that the House clerks were responsible for advising the House student government.

5. Many Division Chairpersons suggested that the House clerks become responsible for some division clerical duties in addition to those from the counselors and House advisors.

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THE CONCEPT OF THE HOUSE

Bigness in education has the advantages of efficiency and economy, but also its disadvantages -- the greatest of which is the tendency of the student to become indistinguishable and "lost." Breaking up the bigness into more educative, manageable and sociologically acceptable groups is the essence of the House Plan.

Architectural response:

A. Each House, serving from 400 to 1000 students, will be located at a pedestrian node.

B. Each House has its own conveniently located parking areas.

C. The House is a place where (1) student meets student; (2) professor meet professor, and even more important; (3) student meets professor in an informal, relaxed atmosphere.

D. Spaces within the House consist of student-faculty lounge, seminars, snack bar-kitchen, library, carrels, student officers' office, offices for faculty associates and counselors, terraces, etc.

E. The House permits more personalized student services.

I. Introduction

Suggestions for implementing the House Plan at Cypress College have been a continual topic of discussion ever since the founding of the college. The House Dean concept has been one such recurrent suggestion. Recent interest in the House Dean concept was stimulated by the Self-Study Report submitted in November, 1975, as part of the application for accreditation of Cypress College. This report recommended that "a 'Task Force' be established...to explcre thoroughly all facets of the House Plan, including: a. 'House Dean' administrative reorganization...(p.55)."

This study was conducted in response to both the Self-Study recommendations and the ongoing interest of faculty and administration in the administrative reorganization of the House Plan. The first goal of the study was to gather suggestions for reorganizing the House Plan. A second goal was to study the House Dean concept in terms of what were the perceived responsibilities of a House Dean, and how people evaluated the concept.

Thus the present report is a compilation of opinions and suggestions about the House Plan and the House Dean concept. Since one goal of the study was to define the House Dean concept, I decided to conduct in-depth interviews with those persons most likely to be directly affected by House reorganization. In keeping with the exploratory nature of the study, each suggestion obtained was given equal weight in this report, whether it was mentioned by one person or ten, by an administrator or a House clerk.

The main body of this report presents organizational charts and respondents' comments on the current House Plan organization, and on suggested reorganizations. A brief list of additional suggestions concerning other aspects of the House Plan and the college follows. Finally, a few recommendations are made for subsequent evaluation of the House Dean concept.

Method. Individual interviews were conducted with each Division Chairperson and House advisor, as well as with selected administrators and House clerks, yielding a total of 22 interviews. Each interview was based on a series of questions which were shown to the interviewee (respondent). These questions, listed in Appendix A, asked the respondents to describe their ideas on the House Dean concept, and on other ways to reorganize the House Plan. All respondents were assured at the beginning of the interview that their statements would be kept confidential. The interviews were conducted in each respondent's office, and lasted anywhere from 20 minutes to 2 hours.

Since the total of number of respondents was small, and since all suggestions were not evaluated by all respondents, no numbers or percentages are associated with any of the suggestions discussed here. In addition, unless deemed necessary, the respondents are not identified by their title.

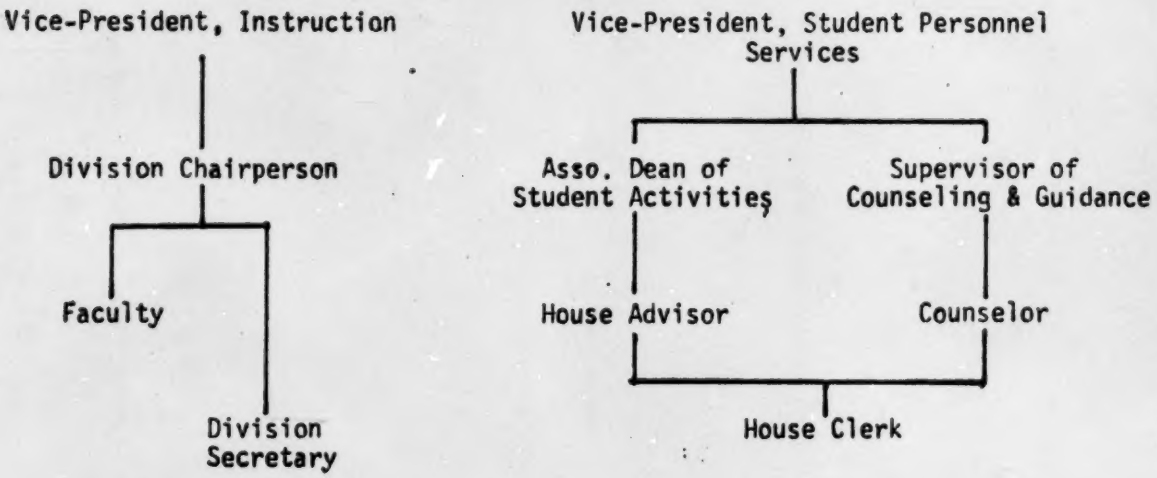
2. Current House Plan Organizational Structure

To provide a basis for evaluating the suggested administrative reorganizations of the House Plan, the current organization chart is shown in Figure 1. The key feature of this organization is the separation between the lines of authority for instruction and student services within the House. Most suggestions for reorganizing the House Plan are attempts to bridge this gap.

Since several previous studies have examined attitudes toward the House Plan, only those comments pertaining to the organizational structure of the House Plan are discussed here.

While almost all respondents felt there was no overlap in the duties of the Division Chairperson and the House Advisor, a few respondents mentioned conflicts occuring over the non-instructional use of the building. There is some disagreement between some House advisors and their Division Chairpersons as to

Figure 1. The current administrative organization chart of the House Plan at Cypress College.



who has jurisdiction over the non-classroom areas of the building. For example, some houses have experienced conflicts when pinball machines and wall hangings were placed in the building by student government without prior notification of the Division Chairperson. While these conflicts appear to have been resolved by the personal efforts of those involved, concern was expressed over the confusion as to who has the final authority.

One administrative respondent expressed concern over the dual role of the House clerk. As can be seen from the organizational chart in Figure 1, the House clerk is locally responsible to the counselors and House advisor. Evaluation of the House clerk, however, is the responsibility of both the Associate Dean of Student Activities and the Supervisor of Counseling and Guidance. This joint supervision is sometimes difficult to coordinate. That it has worked thus far is due to the people in each position, but concern was expressed that the organizational structure itself does not prevent these conflicts.

Most respondents expressed satisfaction with the present House Plan organization. There were, however, many suggestions for minor change. Two frequently occuring suggestions concerning the role of the House clerk are given a complete discussion in Sections 5 and 6. The remaining suggestions are listed in Section 7.

3. House Dean as an Administrator in Charge of House and Division

During the interviews, it rapidly became apparent that there were almost as many perceptions of the House Dean concept as there were respondents. Since it would be meaningless to present 22 separate organizational charts, a composite chart was formed of the most frequently mentioned suggestions. A second composite organizational chart incorporates the less frequently mentioned House Dean organizational features. These two charts reflect the view of the House Dean as an administrator responsible for both the division and the House. A third

organizational chart, discussed in the next section, presents the alternative view of the House Dean as a semi-administrative, full-time House advisor. It should be emphasized that since these charts are composites they do not reflect the views of any single respondent.

The administrative reorganizational chart that incorporates the most frequent perceptions of the House Dean as an administrator is depicted in Figure 2. The main features of this chart are: 1) all personnel within a House report directly to the House Dean, 2) the duties of the Division Chairperson are part of the House Dean's responsibilities, 3) the House Dean receives assistance from department chairpersons, and from a house advisor for student activities, 4) the House Dean reports to the Vice-President of Instruction, and 5) the counselors are coordinated by the Supervisor of Counseling and Guidance, and the house advisors are coordinated by the Associate Dean of Student Activities. Basically, this conception of the House Dean implies that the current campus organization remains the same, except that everyone connected with a House would report to the House Dean.

The less frequently mentioned perceptions of the House Dean are depicted in Figure 3. The three main differences between this chart and Figure 2 are: 1) the House Dean assumes direct responsibility for advising student government 2) the positions of Supervisor of Counseling and Guidance, and Associate Dean of Student Activities, are combined into one position of Coordinator of Counseling and Student Activities (tentative title), and 3) the House Dean reports to both the Vice-President of Instruction and the Vice-President of Student Personnel Services. Note that there are many possible combinations of the organizational features in Figures 2 and 3, each yielding a different view of the House Dean concept.

Respondent's Comments. Most comments were directed at the House Dean concept in general and not at either organizational chart in particular.

Figure 2. Organization chart incorporating the most frequently mentioned perceptions of the administrative House Dean concept.

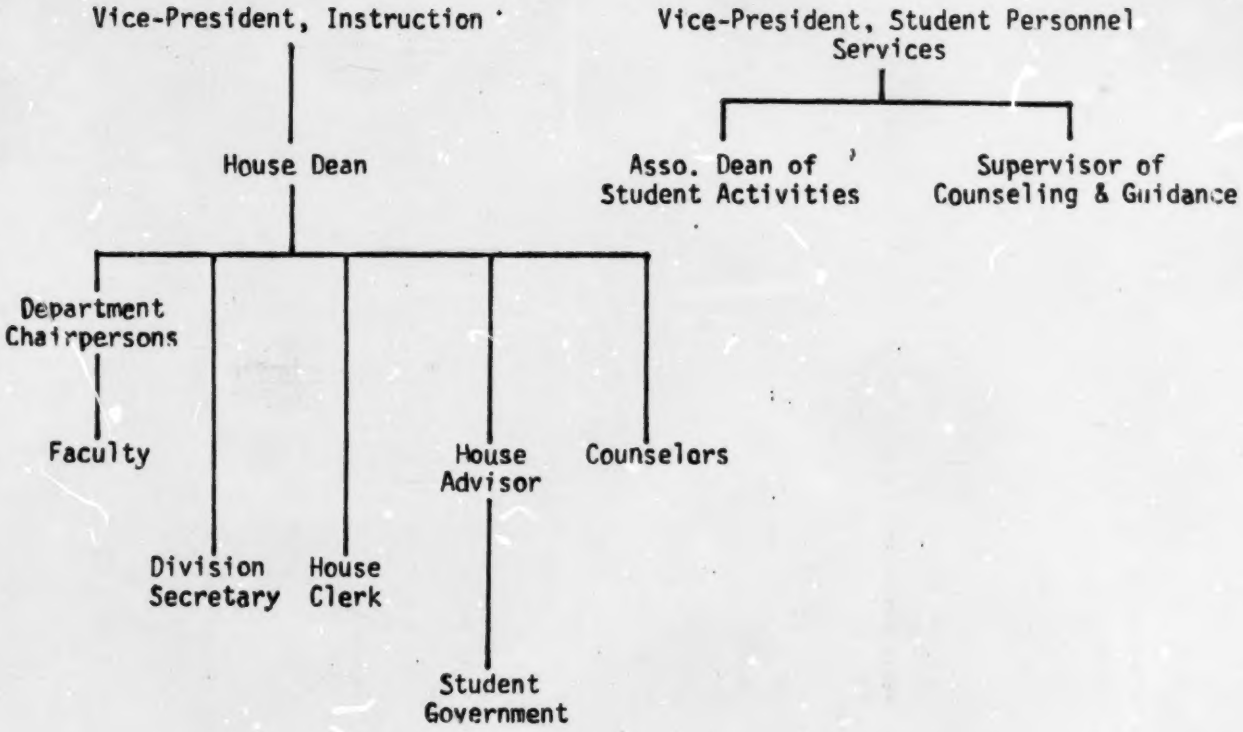
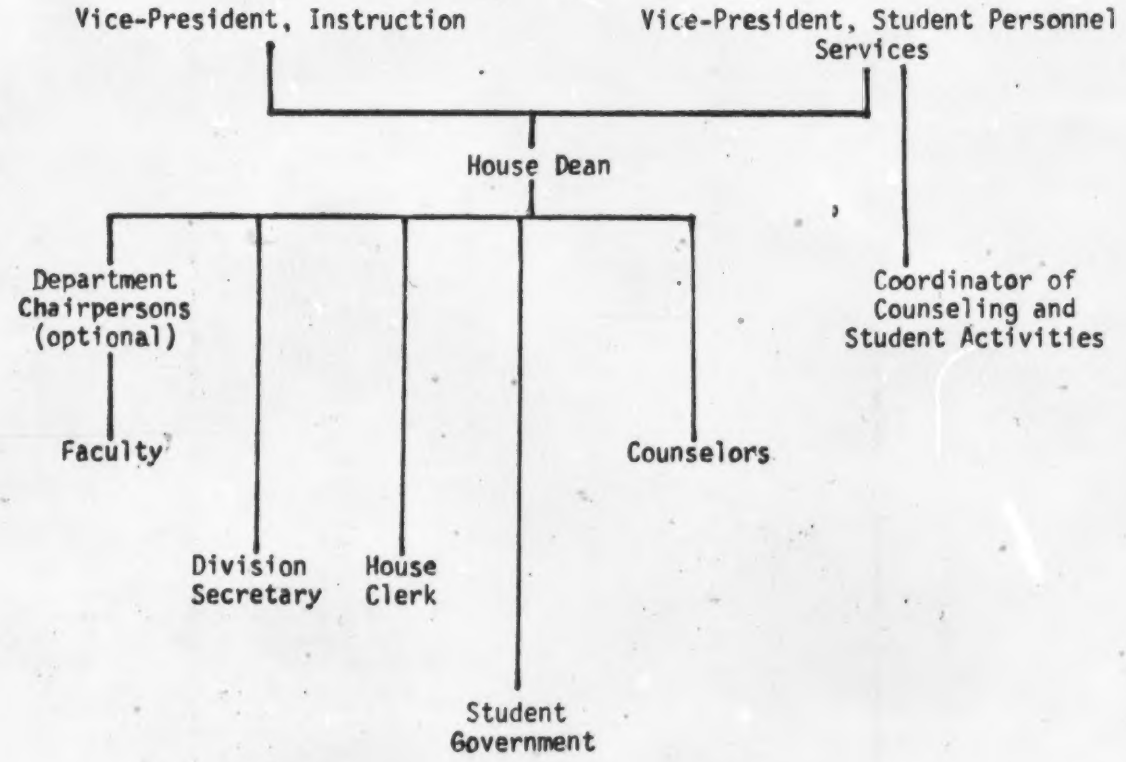


Figure 3. Organizational chart incorporating the less frequently mentioned perceptions of the administrative House Dean concept.



The House Dean was generally perceived as one person who would be totally responsible for everything within both the division and the House. The position was seen as a full-time administrative position, probably requiring an administrative credential, with the Dean also being certificated within that division. Some respondents described the position as comparable to the president of a small college, in that the Dean was responsible for the budget, scheduling, etc. Many respondents said it would be optimal if the House Dean also taught one or two classes during the year, but that most likely the Dean would not have the time.

The time required to do a good job of administering both the division and the House was a prime consideration in respondent's evaluations of the House Dean concept. Most respondents felt there would not be enough time for one person to do it all. They felt the House Dean would need assistance, in the form of either department chairpersons, or a house coordinator, or both. One respondent suggested that the House Dean have two faculty assistants, one for the division and one for the House, each with 2/5 or 3/5 release time.

Several respondetns indicated a need for campus-wide coordination of counseling and student activities. This need exists because: 1) the various houses need to coordinate their student activities to avoid conflicts, and 2) unless the House Dean had experience in counseling or student activities, he or she would not be able to advise the persons in those positions. However, the House advisor and counselor would still be formally responsible to the House Dean.

About two thirds of the respondents had negative evaluations of the House Dean concept as depicted in Figures 2 and 3. Many of them viewed the House Dean as an "unnecessary", "superfluous" third level of administration. Most were concerned about the probable cost of such an administrative reorganization. The cost of a full-time House Dean, plus the release time or part-time costs of the

Dean's assistants, was perceived as more expensive than the current House Plan structure. As one respondent put it, "I don't see any need for additional funds going to administration." It should be noted that a few of these respondents indicated they might be more favorable toward the concept if there was not a 'financial crunch.'

Many respondents with negative evaluations were dubious as to the possible benefits of a House Dean. There was some feeling that the duties of the Division Chairperson and the House advisor were so completely separate that there would be no advantages to combining them. A frequent comment was, "All you have done is change the title of Division Chairperson to House Dean and give the House Dean some control over student activities in the house."

Concern was also expressed that with a House Dean, too much of the success of the House Plan depends on the person in the dean's position. One respondent commented about the "checks and balances" built into the present system which insures the operation of the House Plan. Some respondents questioned the ability of one person to give equal consideration to both student activities and instruction. It was felt that under an administrative House Dean, students might suffer from a lack of attention and understanding.

Finally, a few respondents objected to the title 'House Dean.' One respondent felt the title placed too much emphasis on the house, and that it should reflect the instructional area instead, e.g. 'Dean of Communications.'

Positive Evaluations. On the other hand, about a third of the respondents expressed favorable opinions of the House Dean concept. Most of them viewed the House Dean as the final or logical next step in the development of the House Plan. The main advantage to a House Dean was that it would unify instruction and student activities. The Dean would be totally aware of everything happening within the division, the House, and the building.

Other possible benefits mentioned were complete decentralization, personalization of administration, and increased student-faculty interaction. One respondent suggested that faculty support for the house Plan might be increased if it were supported by a local administrator whose requests were perceived as carrying weight within the division.

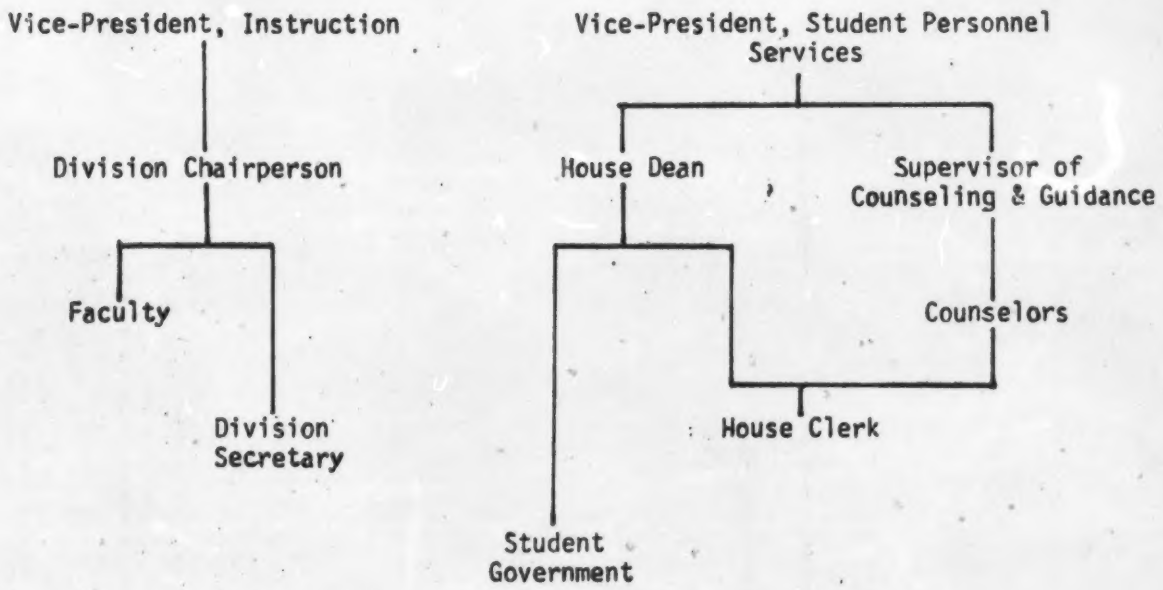
Several respondents with positive evaluations suggested trying out various forms of the House Dean concept on a trial basis. One respondent claimed that with the organization in Figure 3, the campus "would save money and still have an effective House Plan,...in that the students would really run the student government...".

4. House Dean as a Semi-Administrative, Full-time House Advisor

A few respondents perceived the House Dean as a full-time House Advisor who would work with the Division Chairpersons on administrative matters within the division. The organizational implications of this view are depicted in Figure 4. The main features of the organizational chart are: 1) the House Dean is on the same administrative level as the Division Chairperson, and 2) the House Dean reports only to the Vice-President of Student Personnel Services.

The House Dean, in this view, occupies a certificated, low level administrative position (not necessarily requiring an administrative credential). The duties would be essentially the same as those of the current house advisors, with some additional responsibilities, such as the house budget. The Dean would also assist the Division Chairpersons on the administrative duties of the division. It was felt that the House Dean and Division Chairpersons should occupy "parallel" positions, with the House Dean reporting directly only to the Vice-President of Student Personnel Services, or perhaps to an Associate Dean of Student Activities.

Figure 4. Organization chart depicting the House Dean as a full-time, semi-administrative House Advisor.



Many of the suggested advantages of this House Dean concept center around the increased amount of time available to the Dean as House advisor. The Dean could spend this time trying to bring more students in contact with the House, perhaps by coming in a few evenings during the week for the Extended Day students. The House Dean would also have time to promote the division and student activities, both on campus and off.

Another suggested advantage is that this House Dean would be an administrator on a level that students "could relate to." In some sense the Dean would "humanize" administration, and would act as an ombudsman for the division and house. One respondent suggested that the position be titled "Assistant Dean, _____ House", instead of House Dean.

The respondents expressing this view of the House Dean feel that a full-time House Dean or House advisor is the next step in the House Plan.

5. House Clerk as House Advisor

When asked for other ways to reorganize the House Plan, some respondents suggested that the House clerks be responsible for advising the House student government. Under this view, the current organizational structure would remain the same as in Figure 1, with the exception that the House clerks would assume the House advisor duties.

The main argument in support of the House clerks as advisors was that the House clerks already have the required knowledge and experience to advise student government. One respondent said that the House clerks are often the first person the students come to with ideas for house activities, or personal problems within student government.

Some respondents mentioned that the House clerks are present most of the day, whereas the faculty advisors and paraprofessionals are only available a few hours

of each day. Thus the clerk would be there when the student needed advice. Some respondents also felt that there was not enough to do to keep a full-time house advisor busy. The House clerks would be advising student activities in addition to their other duties.

One respondent suggested that the relation between the house and the faculty would not change if the House clerk was also the House advisor. According to this respondent, as long as the house advisor is a classified position, the relationship will primarily be affected by the unconscious (or conscious) bias of the certificated faculty toward the classified staff. Several respondents suggested making the house advisor position a certificated one, as is discussed in Section 7. A final argument was that the House clerks may provide more continuity to the House Plan, in the sense that the House advisor changes frequently, but the House clerks stay on.

On the other side, there was concern that the House clerk would not have enough time to do her original duties plus advise student government. There was also concern that the nature of the House clerk's duties require her to be continually near her desk. The student activities advisor, however, needs to be in many places at many times and it might be difficult for the House clerk to get away from her other duties. In addition, one respondent felt that it would take someone in a position of greater authority to "ride herd on the kids."

6. Role of the House Clerk in the Division

Several Division Chairpersons expressed interest in having the House clerks assume some division clerical duties in addition to their regular duties. A few suggested that there be a formal change in the House clerk job description to include specific division duties, such as answering telephones and taking messages.

Others suggested that the relation between the division and the House clerk continue on an informal basis, with the House clerk "helping out" as able.

The main reason offered for this change in the House clerk's duties was that the degree of student involvement in the House, and the work load from the counselor's fluctuates over the semester. When the House clerk does not have much to do, her talents could be utilized by the division. One respondent suggested that the House clerk receive the extra duties directly from the Division Chairperson, rather than from the Division secretary.

Not all respondents commented on this view, but there were a few arguments in opposition to this change. It was suggested that the heavy student contact nature of the House clerk's position might present a problem in assuming some division duties. For example, because of the different amount of student traffic each day, the clerk could not guarantee the completion of a particular project, such as typing a manuscript, by a certain time. Concern was also expressed that the division would take advantage of the additional help and swamp the clerk to the point that she would not have enough time to take care of the counselors and student government.

A few houses currently have an informal arrangement between the division and the House clerk. It was suggested that before a formal change in the clerk's role was made, the long range effects of computer registration on the House clerk's duties be examined.

7. Suggestions Concerning Other Aspects of the House Plan

During the interviews, the respondents offered suggestions about other aspects of the House Plan. Many of these suggestions have been topics of discussion on campus for some time. Others are, I believe, seeing print for the first time.

They are reproduced here to provide a comprehensive picture of the current operation of the House Plan.

1. Respondents from all levels were concerned with the lack of a House Plan for the Extended Day students. It was suggested that the counselors, secretaries, and possibly the House advisors could schedule their working hours to include some evening time each week. Optimally, their hours would be staggered so that some House personnel were available every night.

2. To increase faculty and student interaction, it was suggested that the Houses sponsor social events for faculty and students, such as a House social hour, or a faculty vs. student softball game.

3. Faculty involvement in the House Plan could be increased if the student activities within the House were directly related to the instructional focus of the division. This orientation is already present in a few houses; it was perceived as the responsibility of the House advisor to suggest such activities.

4. Some House advisors felt the House student governments could be more autonomous from the central student government, that the House governments would work better if they had a little more power in the central government and if they received a larger portion of the money that comes to student government.

5. A few respondents suggested that it should be the responsibility of the House student government to keep the Division Chairperson informed in advance of their projects. Aside from increasing communication between the division and House, this would also teach students how to deal with people in managerial or administrative positions.

6. One respondent felt there should be one central place on campus for typewriters, ditto machines, etc., that are available to all of the House student governments. This would eliminate the duplication of space and equipment in the Houses, and would alleviate the conflicts existing in some Houses between faculty and students over the use of equipment.

7. Some House advisors felt it should be part of the formal college governance rules that the House advisor attends the division meetings to inform the faculty about House activities. This would insure that the faculty is aware of the House activities. The House advisor could be excused from the meeting during those times when faculty only matters are discussed.

8. Several respondents felt the House advisor's position should be certificated. They felt this would help the non-faculty House advisors relate on a more equal level with the division.

9. Some faculty House advisors felt they needed more release time to do a good job of advising. They suggested either 2/5 or 3/5 release time.

10. Several respondents felt that the House advisor's contract should be on a 9 month instead of a 10 month basis. The main reason was that there are too few students around during the summer to warrant a House advisor.

11. A few respondents suggested that the House advisors could also act as counselors, if they had the proper credentials.

12. One respondent suggested that the counselors may not need individual secretaries. They could answer the phones, make appointments, and keep the files themselves.

    Another respondent suggested that the counselors and the House advisors have separate secretaries, which would also alleviate the problem of two "bosses" for the House clerk.

13. It was suggested that the college will need to reevaluate the House clerk's duties when on-line registration, as well as on-line schedule changes become a reality.

14. Several respondents suggested that the House clerks be evaluated directly by the House advisor and the counselors in the House, since they come in daily contact with the House clerk.

15. It was suggested that, ideally, the division secretaries should be in an enclosed office so they will not be interrupted when working on important projects, such as the schedule. A receptionist could be obtained to answer the phones and take student messages.

16. To facilitate communication between faculty members in different divisions, it was suggested that a student holiday be declared and the faculty be given guided tours of the campus that day.

17. One respondent suggested that security guards are needed on campus to protect equipment, and to give traffic tickets so that the parking fines would come to the campus instead of to the city.

8. Future Evaluation

This report was intended as a first step in the study of the House Dean concept, and as part of the continuing study of the House Plan at Cypress College. It is hoped that the suggestions presented here will stimulate experimentation within the House structure.

The definitions of the House Dean concept listed in this report should serve as a base for future evaluation of the concept. There are at least two possible next steps. First, it seems advisable to actually try out some of the proposals suggested here. There may be hidden benefits and/or faults to the House Dean concept that will be apparent only under actual operation. During this experimentation, it should be kept in mind that each House has a distinctively different character due to its instructional orientation. Thus one House may work well with one type of House Dean organization, while another House may operate better with a different organization.

Another step in the study of the House Dean concept should be a formal evaluation using a random sample of faculty and House staff, including the counselors. This would most effectively be done by distributing questionnaires depicting the proposed House Dean organization charts, and asking for evaluations and comments on each.

Appendix A

STUDY OF HOUSE PLAN REORGANIZATION

I.

1. What do you perceive are the functions of the House Advisor?

2. What do you perceive are the functions of the Division Chairperson?

3. Are there any areas where their respective duties are not defined? Any areas of overlapping duties?

II.

4. What is your perception of the possible duties (functions) of a House Dean or House Provost?

5. Who would report to the House Dean?

6. How would the overall House organizational structure appear with a House Dean?

III.

7. What do you see are the possible benefits of a House Dean?

8. What do you see are the possible detrimental effects of a House Dean?

9. What else do you think should be taken into consideration when evaluating the House Dean concept?

10. What is your overall subjective evaluation of reorganization of the House Plan in terms of a House Dean?
At this time?
In terms of cost?

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JUL 28 1978

CLEARINGHOUSE FOR
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